

# Geneva Reporter

*Quaker United Nations Office - Geneva*

## A Year in Retrospective

Dear Friends,

As we look forward to 2010 with hope and determination, we also reflect upon the challenges and successes of the past 12 months. In response to views expressed in a survey conducted in mid-2009 this issue of the Geneva Reporter will attempt to provide our readers with broader views on the work conducted by the Quaker United Nations Offices. This issue will not only offer an insight into the actual work of QUNO but also as to how our efforts reflect the concerns and beliefs of Quakers.

*In Friendship,*

*Quaker United Nations Office*

*Geneva*



Credit: Oiseau — [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

## Conscientious Objection to Military Service

QUNO has worked since the 1950s to gain international recognition for the right of conscientious objection to military service. The slow and often painstaking process through statements and submissions to the UN, resolutions and UN studies helped to increase acceptance to the point at which the intergovernmental human rights bodies recognised conscientious objection to military service. In parallel, QUNO worked with the Human Rights Committee in its interpretation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights, culminating in their groundbreaking decision (*Yoon & Choi v Republic of Korea*) in January 2007 that conscientious objection to military service is protected under Article 18 of the Covenant (the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion). Since then, QUNO's focus, working in conjunction with other international and local non-governmental organisations, has been on getting States to recognise, or improve their provision for, conscientious objection. In 2009, the major step

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## Conscientious Objection to Military Service (cont.)

forward was a ruling of the Colombian Constitutional Court (reversing their previous position) that conscientious objection to military service is protected under the Constitutional provision on freedom of religion and belief. QUNO helped prepare an *amicus curiae* brief to the Court which set out the progress in the international recognition of conscientious objection since the Court's previous consideration of the subject.

In fact, the Colombian Government had rejected a recommendation to

recognise conscientious objection during its consideration under the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, citing the Constitutional Court's position as justification for doing so. It is to be hoped that they will now change their position and not only accept the recommendation but also implement it.

Since the UPR is an intergovernmental process, QUNO's role is not visible, but it has proved a useful new vehicle for raising conscientious objection in relation to

specific countries. During 2009, these included Eritrea, Israel, Serbia and Turkmenistan, in addition to Colombia.

QUNO drew the attention of the Human Rights Council to the welcome 2009 Minute of the World Council of Churches Central Committee (and background study) about conscientious objection, calling on its churches to work for recognition in their countries and to support conscientious objectors.

## Securing the Millennium Development Goals



**Credit:** Edward Parson—  
[www.irinnews.net](http://www.irinnews.net)

Over the past 3 years QUNO has played a key role in energising civil society engagement with the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (AVD). The term 'AVD' is used to describe the mutually enabling relationship between armed violence and under development. The costs of armed violence are not just limited to the deaths of innocent persons or the destruction of physical infrastructure; pervasive climates of insecurity legitimise cultures of violence and obstruct the implementation of development interventions. At the same time, failure to implement appropriate development strategies decreases opportunities for legitimate livelihoods and increases the probability of

armed violence. As identified in a report by the United Nations Secretary General - detailed in the previous issue of the Geneva Reporter - armed violence represents the greatest barrier to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Central to AVD work is the recognition of the need to adopt strategies and frameworks that transcend traditional boundaries of security and development. In 2009, a welcome addition to the growing body of work supporting

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***“Armed violence represents the greatest barrier to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.”***

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the AVD agenda was the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's report *“Armed Violence Reduction: Enabling Development”*. This document contains the 'armed violence lens', a practical tool for the analysis of armed violence that provides guidance on the planning and implementation of AVD strategies. Not only does

the report add to the momentum behind the AVD agenda, it also underlines the mutual relationship between sustainable security and sustainable development.

In order to build upon the accomplishments of the Geneva Declaration to date, it is now necessary to advocate for a more explicit recognition of the impact of armed violence on the MDGs. Such recognition should not be limited to documentation, but also seek a commitment towards practically reducing that impact. A major international meeting in Oslo in April will seek to move the international community in this direction, with a clear focus on the MGD Review Summit in September 2010. The coming year will also provide opportunities for building relationships within the wider violence reduction community, notably at the UN Habitat World Urban Forum in Rio in March. QUNO will continue its active engagement in strengthening the contribution of civil society to these processes. 2010 offers the chance to propel the AVD agenda to a far greater level of international commitment and engagement.



## Letter from QUNO New York

***Quaker work in Geneva and New York has many similarities, particularly in the ways in which we work, providing quiet spaces for conversations to take place away from the microphones and politics. We are in touch with each other on a regular basis, looking for opportunities to work together as we represent Quaker insights at the United Nations. From now on, the Geneva Reporter will regularly contain a letter from QUNO New York.***



**Credit:** *Wikipedia Commons*

QUNO New York has three representatives, Sarah Clarke, who leads on the Prevention programme, Francesca Riddy-O'Dowd, who is the lead on Peacebuilding, and Andrew Tomlinson, Director. We have two programme assistants, Molly Mitchell-Olds and Joe Thwaites. Our Finance and Administration functions are handled by Cathy Thomas. Our office looks out over the landmark UN buildings on the East River, and a few blocks away we have Quaker House, a brownstone in Turtle Bay, which we use for meetings. Our office is administered by the American Friends Service Committee, and we also interact extensively with AFSC's international programmes offices on the ground. Our core programmes are on Peacebuilding and Prevention.

*Peacebuilding:* As QUNO pointed out in its June 30<sup>th</sup> statement on the recent Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict:

"Violence begets violence, and a community, a society cannot move on until that cycle is broken, until the hurts and wrongs are named, and people relearn how to solve their problems without resorting to violence." Friends have much to contribute in this area, both in the conceptual development of holistic peacebuilding approaches, and in implementing activities on the ground. By contrast, current UN thinking on peacebuilding, as evidenced by the work of the Peace Building Commission to date and the content of the Secretary-General's report, is preoccupied with building State capacity and adapting peacekeeping, humanitarian and development mechanisms for delivery. We have found that there is a niche for an organization like QUNO to promote a more holistic approach to peacebuilding by the wider UN community, one that places greater emphasis on the repairing of relationships at all levels of society and that consequently supports measures that promote reconciliation, restorative practice and nonviolent conflict transformation.

*Prevention:* two important components of UN work on the prevention of violent conflict are (i) operational programme work of the UN on the ground that aims to prevent the occurrence of violent conflict (which often takes place well in advance of possible violence), and (ii) preventive diplomacy at the political level, that aims to facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes (which may

take place in advance or may be in response to actual conflict). In either case, we have found that the themes that feel right to us for Friends to emphasize are similar to those in peacebuilding, particularly that approaches to prevention need to be more holistic and inclusive of all key stakeholders.

Ultimately, QUNO seeks to support the UN's work in the area of prevention and peaceful settlement of disputes so that it focuses not only on the cessation of hostilities, but also includes all relevant parties, establishing the basis for sustainable peace.

*Quaker United Nations Office  
New York*

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*The QUNO New York Team, 2009*



## Reasons to be hopeful? Prospects for the Disarmament Agenda in 2010

The start of a new year is a hopeful time. We put the disappointments of the previous year aside and aim for better things for the months ahead. Such an approach is appropriate for the disarmament agenda for 2010.

As these things have gone in recent years, 2009 was not a bad year for arms control and disarmament. The largest disappointment was the failure of the Conference on Disarmament, having seemingly broken through the impasse regarding a programme of work by mid-year, to actually begin work on negotiations towards a nuclear weapons fissile materials cut-off treaty. This can only add to the large degree of cynicism that now surrounds thinking about the future of this important institution. On the more positive side, a flawed but nevertheless important step towards actual negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was taken in the UN General Assembly in the autumn of 2009. Perhaps most significantly, not only did a change in the US administration signal a new US attitude on multi-lateral arms control and disarmament in general, but the positive rhetoric of the Obama administration with regard to nuclear weapons. This was manifested in early negotiations with the Russian Federation on a replacement for the now expired 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) aimed at further reducing the strategic arsenals of both countries. The Cartagena Summit in December, marking the 2d Review Conference for the Anti-personnel Mine Convention, underlined the real success that this treaty has had in its 10 years since entry-into-force. Despite some encouraging steps in

2009, sober reflection reveals, among other things, that in 2009 the world's nations continued to spend nearly \$1.5 trillion dollars on arms and the research and development of new weapons continued apace, even in the midst of a global economic crisis.

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***“As these things have gone in recent years, 2009 was not a bad year for arms control and disarmament.”***

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Throughout 2009, QUNO was actively involved on many disarmament fronts, including its long engagement with processes related to small arms and light weapons. What can we expect for 2010? Are there good reasons to be hopeful at this start of a new year? 2010 will bring a number of opportunities for progress to be made. But they must be seized. Good results from the US/Russian Federation negotiations on strategic nuclear weapons will help generally. A positive outcome of the “global nuclear security summit” scheduled for April in Washington will enhance prospects for good results from the critically important Review Conference for the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), to take place over four weeks in May.

The NPT Review Conference will represent the best hope this year and probably for some time for strong commitment by states not only for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons but also for setting a new trajectory towards a

nuclear weapons free world. In January, the Conference on Disarmament has begun a new session. Will the member states of this body really let this institution stagnate for another year? An early agreement not only on a programme of work but also on how that work will proceed would help to restore faith in this body and also set a positive atmosphere for the NPT Review Conference. (Early signs unfortunately are not good).

In June, the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) on the UN Programme of Action (PoA) on small arms and light weapons will take place. This meeting will seek to build on the positive outcomes of the Third BMS in 2008 by focusing on key issue areas relating to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, while also laying out steps towards the Second Review Conference in 2012. In July the first preparatory committee for the 2012 conference on the Arms Trade Treaty will take place, offering first chance to create momentum for the eventual negotiations.

The disarmament calendar in 2010 is a full one, offering many settings where opportunity exists for taking steps towards reducing the obscene distortion of human priorities that the present militarization of global politics represents. A positive element in all of this is the degree to which the discourse in international politics is moving issues of security into a broader range of human and planetary concerns and vice versa. At this stage of the year, we are hopeful for genuine progress. We at QUNO will be engaged in a many activities aimed at turning such hope into concrete action.



## Women in Prison



**Credit:** [www.stockvault.net](http://www.stockvault.net)

During 2009 the UN took up with enthusiasm the need to create new standards in relation to women prisoners and non-custodial measures for women offenders. QUNO and the Quaker representatives to the UN Criminal Justice bodies in Vienna started raising the issue of women prisoners in 2003 (initially at the request of British Quakers but subsequently endorsed by the world Quaker body).

Globally, women form about 4-5% of the prison population, but they are the most rapidly growing part of it. Yet few women are serious violent prisoners. In general terms, most women are imprisoned because of minor drugs and economic criminal offences. The profile of women who end up in prison demonstrates high levels of

a history of prior physical and sexual abuse, drug and alcohol dependency and, in some countries, mental health problems. In addition, most women prisoners are mothers and usually the sole or main carer of minor children. Imprisonment not only fails to address many of the reasons why women offend, but often exacerbates the problems.

Since 2003 QUNO has not only raised the issues about women prisoners directly with UN bodies and through side events in Geneva and Vienna, resulting in their inclusion in a number of UN resolutions, but has produced a series of publications culminating in *Women in Prison: A Commentary on the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (2008). This demonstrated that these Rules (adopted in 1955) did not adequately address the specificity of women prisoners but rather of the majority male prison population.

The work of QUNO, other Quakers (the Vienna representatives, British Quakers and the Quaker Council for European Affairs) and other organisations, led the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to prepare an official Handbook on the management of women's prisons,

to which QUNO and its publications contributed.

In parallel with these developments, the World Health Organisation (WHO) European Office, alerted by the Quaker work on women prisoners to the health specific aspects of the issue, prepared a paper on women's health and prisons, and a Declaration (adopted in Kyiv, 2008), to both of which QUNO and the three Quaker bodies mentioned above contributed. These were published in 2009 jointly by WHO Europe and UNODC.

QUNO was delighted that at the beginning of 2009, the Thai Ministry of Justice announced its intention to work with UNODC to create new UN rules specifically on women prisoners to supplement the Standard Minimum Rules. QUNO participated in the expert meeting in February which prepared the draft of these rules, and in the intergovernmental expert meeting in November (both in Bangkok) which revised this to produce the official draft Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders. This will be forwarded through the UN system for adoption during 2010.

## QUNO Seeks New Programme Assistants



*The QUNO Geneva Team, 2009*

***Would you, or somebody you know, be interested in working at the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva?***

Each year QUNO Geneva takes on one or more Programme Assistants to work as part of the QUNO team. Responsibilities can range from carrying out research

for publications, to assisting with office administration, or from attending form processes at the United Nations on behalf of QUNO to cooking soup for a lunch time seminar.

Details on how to apply will soon be posted on our website:

<http://quno.org/getInvolved/getProgramAsst-Geneva.htm>



## From Trade Justice to Climate Justice?



**All Photos, Credit:** *Ronnie Hall—[www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)*

The World Trade Organization (WTO) held its Seventh Ministerial Conference in Geneva in late 2009, ten years to the day after the WTO's Third Ministerial Conference in Seattle. Host to demonstrations known as 'the battle in Seattle,' the 1999 Ministerial drew international attention and served as a catalyst for expressions of discontent about economic globalization. In contrast, the WTO's 2009 Ministerial passed almost unnoticed. A few days later, another international gathering – the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference – stole the spotlight.

The different levels of interest in the WTO Ministerial and the Climate Change Conference reflect a trend in civil society work on international economic issues: a growing concern for climate change and loss of interest in the WTO. Geneva Reporter readers will recall that the WTO was long a focus of QUNO's Global Economic work – but in 2009 QUNO's Committee decided that the Global Economic Issues programme should prioritize its work around three issue areas:

food, migration and climate change. So is trade no longer important?

Quaker work on economic issues seeks to address injustice, and to promote a more equitable and sustainable economic system. Ten years ago, the WTO drew attention as a new and powerful international body with a defining role in international economic governance. Its influence extended beyond strictly-defined trade issues, affecting other areas including employment, environment and health. Developing countries were excluded from meaningful participation in WTO decision-making. The WTO thus became a focal point for civil society work seeking to address economic injustice, whether within or between countries. It made sense then for Quaker work to look closely at the WTO as a priority locus for remedying inequities in the economy.

This work yielded tangible results: developing countries now are more able to make their voices heard in international economic decision-making. Civil society is much more aware of trade policy issues and negotiations so

decisions can no longer be made in such an unaccountable way. Also, trade officials can no longer get away with claims that public interest concerns such as health and the environment should not be on the trade agenda. Yet these results have had a flip side, one being that economically powerful countries are turning to regional or bilateral trade agreements with developing countries, where they are more likely to get results that suit their interests. This complicates civil society work: instead of being located in one place (previously the WTO in Geneva), trade policy is being negotiated all over the globe in many sets of processes, making it harder for civil society groups to follow and mobilize around.

Meanwhile, WTO Members have been struggling to finish the so-called Doha Round of trade negotiations. WTO Members had declared that they would conclude the Round by the end of 2005, a deadline that was pushed back and then missed in 2006, and again in 2007, 2008 and 2009! The 2009 Ministerial was not intended to be a negotiating session, and its main result was to reaffirm the need to conclude the Doha Round in 2010.

The line within WTO circles is 'once we get the Doha Round out of the way we can start addressing new or issues such as climate change.' This was evident in two work sessions during the Ministerial, which provided an opportunity for discussion about broader issues facing the WTO, and in the course of which a large number of Members mentioned climate change. Yet the fact remains that the draft...

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## Reflections Around the WTO's 2009 Ministerial Conference

Doha Round agreements are bad for developing countries. From a trade justice perspective, no deal is better than a deal. And as WTO Members are doing well in not reaching a deal without civil society input, it is understandable that those concerned with equity and sustainability in the global economy are putting their energy elsewhere.

At the same time as the momentum of the WTO talks has slowed, the issues are being dealt with in increasing levels of technicality. The WTO's 153 Member States fret about details and about not losing what has been achieved so far in the Doha negotiations. The WTO secretariat is doing its best to make the WTO seem like a relevant organization despite the negotiating stalemate, and the fact that its work is peripheral to the today's main economic concerns (i.e. the fragility of recovery from the financial crisis, employment, financial regulation or climate change). This makes it hard to inject a sense of vision or optimism into the organization, and is a natural disincentive to broad civil

society mobilization on WTO issues.

This, along with the media attention which the urgency of preventing climate change receives, the fact that governments are increasingly concerning themselves with the issue, and the large amounts of



available funding compared to other areas, has led many groups to turn their attention to the topic. Others are maintaining their trade focus but many of these are centred on issues other than the WTO, such as the accountability of private corporations, the European Union's Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations, or US bilateral trade agreements.

The Copenhagen meeting forced

us to confront the fact that our civilisation is destroying the life systems on which we depend. It is becoming harder than ever to argue that progress requires increased consumption, international trade and economic liberalisation. Rather, progress – our very survival even – depends on ensuring diversity, maintaining life systems, reducing excessive consumption, sharing the world's resources more equitably and finding ways of responding to the needs of those whose livelihoods are endangered by our consumption-based economic system. In this sense, the climate change agenda raises some of the issues that the trade justice movement held dear, and provides a new focus and momentum for mobilization.

This does not mean that QUNO will abandon its concern for trade. Rather, we will address it through the lens of a particular issue (food, migration or climate change). The economic justice and environmental sustainability dimensions will be in the front of our minds as QUNO's work on global economic issues moves forwards.

## Quaker United Nations Summer School



**Credit:** Tom Richardson

For two weeks in July, like every year, the calm and tranquillity of Quaker House was shattered by the arrival of inquisitive young

Friends from across the world. The fortnight offered both stimulating discussion and thoughtful reflection, enriched by participants from as far afield as Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Rwanda, Sudan and Liverpool.

The United Nations Summer School run by QUNO Geneva offers the opportunity for young persons interested in current affairs the chance to observe the international system at work.



For further information and application forms for the 2010 Summer School, please visit :

<http://www.quno.org/getInvolved/IntlSummerSchool-Geneva.htm>



## Quakers at the Copenhagen Climate Conference

In December 2009, ten Quakers from six countries attended COP15 (the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and to the Kyoto Protocol) in Copenhagen, as members and guests of Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW). We came to network and exchange ideas, to see at close hand what happens at big international meetings, and simply to witness by our presence that Quakers care about the earth. We did not expect to have direct impact on the negotiations, but were ready to learn and grow ourselves.

We also wanted to establish links among Friends around the world with deep spiritual concern for the living planet in which we participate. Here we made a good beginning, and look forward to future collaboration.

The official Conference was dominated by national self-interests. Suspicion and animosity took the foreground and a life-viable future for the earth receded. It remains to be seen whether the “Copenhagen Accord,” introduced by the United States and others at the end of the meetings, will be useful in the long run, since it produced such anger, confusion and sense of betrayal among many nations. In contrast, at a civil society *Klimaforum* held nearby, all shared a serious but joyful understanding that we will work together for the long-term viability of the Earth for humans and others.

We Friends found hope in the energy and determination of the many thousands of ordinary folk who marched and sang and prayed, shared high-quality information sessions, and are

determined not to give up. We are among them.

*Mary Gilbert, Friends Meeting at Cambridge (Massachusetts, USA)*

To read the Decisions adopted at Copenhagen:

<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

For a detailed account of the Copenhagen meetings:

[www.iisd.ca/vol12/enb12459e.html](http://www.iisd.ca/vol12/enb12459e.html)

For commentary we suggest:

*Reflections from Copenhagen*  
[www.wri.org/stories/2009/12/reflections-copenhagen-accord-and-way-forward](http://www.wri.org/stories/2009/12/reflections-copenhagen-accord-and-way-forward)

*Lessons From the Copenhagen Climate Talks*  
[www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1929071\\_1929070\\_1949054,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1929071_1929070_1949054,00.html)

## Panel Discussion on Intellectual Property and Food

In September, QUNO organized a panel discussion during the WTO Public Forum. This explored the way in which intellectual property rules impact on availability and diversity of seeds,

as well as on the adaptability of our food system to innovate in response to new challenges such as climate change. The written report of the panel discussion is now available. Readers wishing to

listen to the whole discussion can download the full audio from:

[http://www.wto.org/english/forums\\_e/public\\_forum09\\_e/programme\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/public_forum09_e/programme_e.htm)

*(Scroll down to session 30)*

## Recent QUNO Publications

***Children Need Dads Too***, by Jenifer Rosenberg, now available in English, French and Spanish.

***Orphans of Justice***, by Jean Tomkin, now available in English, French and Spanish.

***Peacebuilding in Geneva: Mapping the Landscape***,

By the Geneva Peace Building Platform, edited by Adam Drury

***The Curate's Egg***, by Rachel Brett, a review of the 3rd Year of the Human Rights Council

**These documents are available on our website or can be delivered on request.**

**If you would like to donate to QUNO's work, please visit our website at [www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org) for our bank details or to make a donation by credit card. Many thanks!**



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